



# STATE OF MINNESOTA

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### **GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ANNOUNCES NEXT STEPS IN HEALTH CARE COST CONTAINMENT**

*~ Citizens Forum principles part of Governor's proposal and call for reaching "common ground"~*

**Saint Paul** – Governor Tim Pawlenty announced today a list of health care cost containment measures recommended by the Minnesota Citizens Forum on Health Care Costs, an 18-member citizen panel, led by former U.S. Senator Dave Durenberger. The Forum's work includes several key principles to guide health care reform efforts.

"Band-aids and aspirin will not fix the state of our health care system," Governor Pawlenty said. "Health care costs are one of the biggest burdens on the pocketbooks of families, businesses and all levels of government in Minnesota. We need a major transformation."

The Citizens Forum began its work last fall at the request of the Governor. The Forum's leadership panel spent two months conducting twelve town hall meetings across the state and sifting through hundreds of ideas and proposals sent in by Minnesotans.

"I've been representing Minnesota citizens for 30 years," said Senator Durenberger. "But I've never seen this level of citizen participation, nor such a strong desire of Minnesotans for comprehensive change."

The panel found strong agreement among most Minnesotans on a number of key principles to guide the health care reform debate:

1. Put Minnesotans in the driver's seat to make decision about their health care. Minnesotans need to define what the health care system should do as opposed to the system defining itself.
2. Citizens should be fully informed about health care costs and quality. They should know where the money goes, how it is used, who profits from it, and what quality and outcomes we are getting for our money.
3. Health care costs can be reduced by improving quality of care and eliminating health disparities.
4. Encourage personal responsibility by changing incentives to encourage better health. The current system does not reward individuals for healthy lifestyles nor does it give health care providers for improving their patients' health.

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5. Assure participation in the health care system by all Minnesotans. Citizens want access and security, but not a government-run health care system. We need to ensure meaningful participation by both payers and individuals so we have a health care system in which everyone receives needed care, including preventive care, at a cost they can afford.
6. Administrative costs and overhead should be reduced by streamlining and standardizing administrative procedures and making use of electronic technology.

The Citizens Forum report, which will be released by February 23, 2004, will contain detailed action steps for each of the six general recommendations.

Governor Pawlenty announced he will take four major steps to lead the effort to bring about health care change in Minnesota:

1. The State of Minnesota will lead by example by developing a cohesive health care purchasing and regulatory strategy, and use its leverage as a major purchaser of health care for public employees and state health care programs.
2. The Governor will build a strong alliance with other governmental units, employers and other private buyers of health care to further strengthen the ability of employers and consumers to bring about change in the health care system.
3. The Governor will work with private leaders representing consumers, business and health care to form a new public-private partnership that will coordinate and manage the major changes that are called for in the Citizens Forum report.
4. The Governor will work with legislative leaders to convene a bipartisan working group to seek agreement on the public policy changes that will be needed.

“There’s no question in my mind that we can find a great deal of common ground in health care reform,” said Governor Pawlenty. “We can’t afford to politicize this issue, but need to come together on real solutions designed to cut health care costs for Minnesotans.”

The Governor noted that work on the recommendations will begin immediately. He plans to seek legislative changes in the 2005 legislative session as part of his biennial budget proposal.

Joining the Governor at the press conference were many of the Citizens Forum leadership panel members, including former Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe and former Senate Minority Leader Duane Benson.